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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cassis amendment sets stage for Wixom Ford Plant property redevelopment

State Sen. Nancy Cassis today sponsored an amendment that would permit the City of Wixom to designate all or part of the Wixom Ford Plant property as a Renaissance Zone.

With the amendment, Senate Bill 922 gives local officials the option of using tax breaks to spur redevelopment. Ford on Monday announced it would cease production at the 49-year-old assembly plant in less than two years.

“First and foremost, our thoughts and concerns go out to the men and women and their families who anticipate losing their jobs by 2007,” said Cassis, R-Novi, chair of the Senate Finance Committee. “Difficult times also give us the chance to make changes and create opportunities for workers and businesses.

“This includes the opportunity for the state to partner with Ford for worker retraining, redevelopment of the 318-acre site, and working with Wixom’s mayor, city council and management, making it a viable site for future redevelopment and employment.”

Cassis also urged action on the long-delayed Wixom Road/I-96 interchange. She noted that a more modern, safer interchange is essential to attracting redevelopment to the area and spurring economic growth.

“Importantly, although Ford company officials have indicated that the Wixom interchange wasn’t part of their decision, Governor Granholm said she would reinstitute the project in conjunction with Ford sparing Wixom’s closure,” Cassis said. “Furthermore, Ford union workers appeared in considerable numbers at the grand opening for the Beck Road interchange on Oct. 24, 2005.

“They held up a sign that read ‘WIN: Wixom I-96 Now,’ referring to the fact that the Wixom interchange project was supposed to begin right after Beck Road was completed.

“Beck is done. Gov. Granholm twice vetoed the Wixom project before having a change of heart, and has now publicly stated that Wixom is on MDOT’s five year plan. It is high time for the governor to keep her promise to begin reconstruction.”

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Editor’s Note: A picture of the ‘WIN: Wixom I-96 Now’ sign is available for download at <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Cassis/Cassis.htm>